

hello
February

A decorative calligraphic illustration for the month of February. The word "hello" is written in a smaller, elegant cursive script above the word "February", which is rendered in a larger, more prominent cursive font. The text is surrounded by several dark red roses with green leaves and stems, interspersed with small, light pink hearts and tiny pink dots. The overall composition is centered and has a soft, romantic feel.



PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Living out our faith in Jesus every day is both important and challenging. Consistently acting in a way that demonstrates our faith is an important part of our witness and our daily walk with Jesus. The epistle of James is a helpful guide to putting our faith into practice every day. This book was very likely written by Jesus' brother, James. And James knew what it was to walk by faith daily as he watched Jesus do it daily.

We will begin this sermon series in February and then continue it after Lent and Easter. The series will focus on how to live our lives in faith in a variety of simple ways that we encounter regularly. Topics in James will include dealing with stress and anger and burnout. We will examine how to focus on God so we can focus on others - and not so much on things. We'll look at how to speak in love and demonstrate love by being patient. And we will look at how to live our lives of faith with integrity.

Pastor Ashley and I look forward to taking this spiritual journey with you as we look to live our faith in Jesus every day.

Peace,
Pastor Doug



As I reflect upon love this month, I am moved to consider the passage which has defined love for Christians since the 1st century AD. The First Letter to the Corinthians was written by Paul to the church at Corinth, a city filled with a diverse group of the nouveau riche trying to discern among themselves what it meant to be a Christian. Chapter 13 is particularly poignant because it provides specific characteristics of love; it serves as almost a litmus test as to whether one is following the risen Christ. For this reason, this passage is one of my favorites, and I spend a lot of time studying and reflecting upon it.

Often, to get the most meaning and understanding from a passage, I like to read it in different versions of the Bible to engage the differing perspectives of the translation teams. Even though, for the most part, the translation of the New Testament is completed using the same ancient Greek manuscripts, there are variations in language and emphasis from one translator to another, resulting in linguistic differences from one version of the Bible to another. Put simply, different translation teams use different words to translate the same Biblical passages into English. Specifically in this passage, I think there is great value in studying the rich tapestry of language folks have utilized to interpret the eternal truths Paul was trying to teach us about love.

To that end, I have researched and reprinted various versions of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a from different versions of English Bibles. Some are translations and some are technically paraphrases, but all seek to interpret the original Greek scriptures of the New Testament into English. I encourage us to read through these different versions and reflect upon a word or a phrase that may speak to us or make the truth about love a little more personal or practical in our lives. As we work, I will include my own thoughts and notes in italics so I can share what speaks to me from these verses. Let's go!

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (NIV)
I grew up reading the NIV so this version is my Old Faithful – its language is the most familiar to me. Nice prose, but nothing new to glean here.

Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things. Love never fails. (CEB)

Nice reminder here that we don't love others in order to gain something for ourselves or to "seek our own advantage." Somehow, remembering this makes it just a little easier to love those who are difficult to love. And "love is not irritable" is a stark reminder to be joyful, not aggravated or aggrieved, when we get the opportunity to show love to others and therefore show love to God. Besides, if we are constantly irritated by the person(s) we love, is it really love? Or is it something else?

Love is patient and kind, not jealous, not boastful, not proud, rude or selfish, not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not gloat over other people's sins but takes its delight in the truth. Love always bears up, always trusts, always hopes, always endures. Love never ends. (CJB)

Amen! I feel this most keenly when Christians won't stop harping on other peoples' sins, propping ourselves up because we don't commit that particular sin. It's not loving, and I am glad it is written here in black and white.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not selfish, and it cannot be made angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. Love is never happy when others do wrong, but it is always happy with the truth. Love never gives up on people. It never stops trusting, never loses hope, and never quits. Love will never end. (ERV)

I like this a lot because it encourages empathy along with love. When we choose to love others, we put ourselves in their shoes and identify with them, so that when they overcome their obstacles and succeed, we are truly happy for them. And "love never gives up on people" speaks volumes by itself. Lord, help us to never give up on people.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices over the truth. Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always continues strong. Love never ends. (International Children's Bible)

I appreciate the image of always "continuing strong" – it reminds me of running a marathon instead of a race. Marathons take focus, drive, and determination over a long period of time, just like love does. Marathons can become a grind, just like love can. But keeping our mind on the "finish line" when we all gather before the King is the key to finishing strong.

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. (PHILLIPS)

Having good manners means being polite, respectful, kind, and caring. It means considering what the other person needs and loving them in a manner that is not overbearing or possessive or controlling. It has never occurred to me that we might be ill-mannered with our love toward others. Hmm...I think I'll give this some more thought.

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him. All the special gifts and powers from God will someday come to an end, but love goes on forever. (The Living Bible)

Whew! This language is so clear and precise. I am so moved by the way Eugene Peterson personalized this passage and made it come alive. I really appreciate the mention of loyalty here as it relates to support and defense of others because it implies that when we choose to love, we are to be loyal whether they deserve it or not because we have Someone who is loyal to us, no matter what. Also, expecting the best of someone is a part of love that I have never thought about – hoping for the best, praying for the best, yes, but expecting the best of them? That seems to be different.

If I love people, I will be patient. I will be kind. I will not be jealous of other people. I will not be proud and say that I am great. If I love people, I will be polite. I will not just want to please myself. I will not quickly become angry. If someone does a wrong thing against me, I will not keep it in my thoughts. If I love people, I will not be happy when bad things happen. Instead, I will be happy when things happen that are right and true. If I love people, I will always accept their problems. I will always believe them. I will always hope for what is best. I will always be patient in troubles. Love will always continue. (EASY)

I love the “If...then” structure of this version. This is, by far, my favorite translation. No frills, just chills! This is the second time we have seen politeness as a part of love, and the third or fourth time we have seen an emphasis on supporting and bearing with others as a part of loving them. “I will always accept their problems, and I will always believe in them” is a difficult pill to swallow, but it does seem to go with the sentiment of the rest of the passage. Lord, help our love to never run out!

I hope you enjoyed this exercise! What new insights or perspectives did you gain?

Blessings!,
Pastor Ashley

One of the greatest gifts Jesus gives us is robust, secure identities. This is such good news in a time of such fragile cultural identities.-Jon Tyson



January for Oasis is off to a great start, and I'm excited to see what the rest of February has in store for our amazing group. For those who were able to come out to WinterJam 2025, thank you, we had such an amazing time together. For both January and February our groups series has been about "Identity" and what core values shape who I am, as a follower of Christ.

We have discussed subjects like: how well do we know each other, how well do people know us, and who am I in Christ. Subjects for this month will be: Do I know the fruits of the spirit, what are my Spiritual gifts and what do they mean, and lastly what it means to be called by Jesus. I'm excited to see the results of these lessons and hope they create lasting changes within our students.

As far as our mission trip is concerned, our group will be traveling to Puerto Rico this summer! As of right now I am still working out details concerning the trip but I promise that more details of the trip should be released this month. I will also be scheduling a parents meeting about the trip this month for late march or early April so stay tuned for that. We are also looking for volunteers for the trip, if you are interested please, inform me via email.

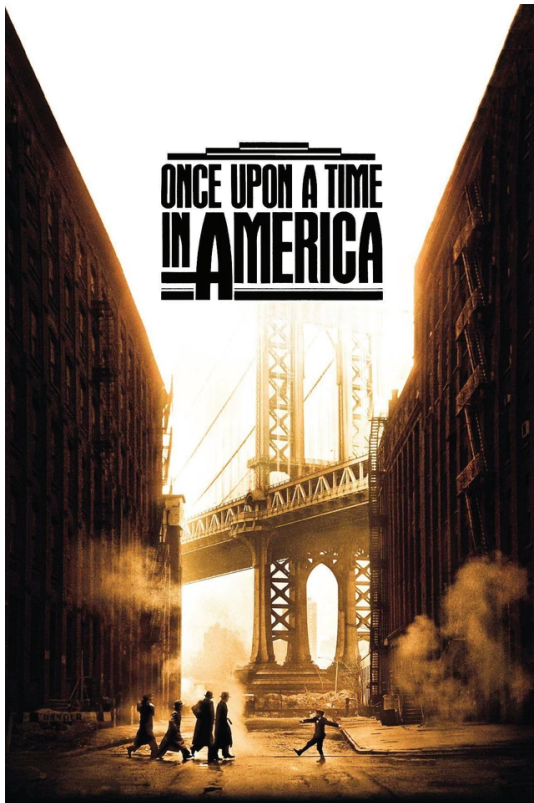
As fun as it is to be part of Oasis, I do hear that some people wish they had something like Oasis for themselves, a place where people post high school, people with young families or people who are just trying to figure things out can go to learn more about the bible and be in fellowship with believers of their same age.



Well after hearing that it's my great privilege to announce that, this month I will be starting up a new group for our young adults/young parents/singles (ages ranging 19-40 years old). Our first official meeting will be at Central UMC and will be on February 22nd and will start @ 5pm-6:30 pm. We will have a home cooked meal provided for us, as we venture deeper into the bible together in a time of fun and fellowship. So if that is you, we encourage you to join us and invite a friend to be with us as we gather.

I know I say this a lot but I truly mean it, I'm excited to see what God has for our group, well soon to be groups. And I'm blessed to be a part of God vision for these wonderful Ministries. Please continue to keep our groups in prayer, church family!

Blessings,
Stephen Flores II



THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE OF MEMORY: “DEBORAH’S THEME” AND MORRICONE’S GENIUS

Ennio Morricone, one of the greatest and most prolific composers in cinema history, composed music for *Once Upon a Time in America*. The film, directed by Sergio Leone, tells the story of gangsters, time, and memory, and is accompanied by an unforgettable musical score that touches on deep emotional themes, especially the iconic “Deborah’s Theme.”

Morricone’s music is not just a background to the action; it becomes an emotional character of its own. In “Deborah’s Theme,” there is a haunting sense of nostalgia that echoes through every note, capturing the essence of lost time and unspoken emotions. The piece itself feels like a story told without words, much like the human experiences we encounter in the church community: stories of love, loss, and longing, each with its own melody and rhythm.

One of the most powerful moments in the film for me is when Noodles revisits an old place from his past and looks through a peephole, remembering his youthful obsession with Deborah. As he slowly walks to the peephole and gazes through it, “Deborah’s Theme” plays, pulling Noodles—and the audience—back into a time long gone. The music here is not just an accompaniment to the scene, but an emotional bridge that connects the past with the present. Noodles’ eyes seem to me full of pain, longing, memories, and regret, and Morricone’s score beautifully amplifies the weight of those emotions.

The slow, sustained notes of “Deborah’s Theme” carry the viewer into Noodles’ memories, where the tender and carefree music of “Amapola” of the past that Deborah dances to immediately contrasts with the heavy nostalgia and melancholy of the present. In this moment, Morricone’s music enhances the bittersweet nature

of memory. The journey through the peephole represents a longing to return to a simpler time, a time before life's complexities and regrets clouded the vision.

As we journey through life, we often find ourselves looking through a metaphorical 'peephole,' revisiting moments from the past—whether filled with joy, innocence, loss, or mistakes. Beyond the storyline of this film, through the lens of faith, we are reminded that while memories may stir sorrow, they can also offer opportunities for growth, healing, and redemption. Just as our church community provides a space for reflection and renewal, we are called to look forward with hope, trusting in God's grace to guide us beyond our past and into a future filled with purpose and peace.

I will be recording Deborah's Theme on the piano and sharing it with the congregation through Christin. I hope it offers you a moment of reflection, bringing the beauty of Morricone's music into our church community.

Blessings,
Shiyu



BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! COME ON, MOVE IT!

Here I was running late for a late afternoon meeting at a local establishment. I was traveling on a two-lane road that was somewhat slippery in spots, and I was stuck behind a large, commercial truck, going under fifty miles per hour. Miles go by, seemingly without a single, safe chance to accelerate and pass it. I could feel my neck and brow begin to grow sweaty.

This truck driver, who was more than likely on the clock, was clearly not in a hurry to get to his destination. While he was enjoying his smoke, it never appeared that he was paying much attention to his rear view mirror where the line of traffic was steadily increasing behind us. As I drove in the car by myself, I rehearsed aloud what I would like to say to him: "Hey Fella, there are other folks on this road who might need to get to their destination quicker than this. Get moving!"

Finally, the truck turned off, and I could see what the cause of his driving speed was. Now, in front of me was a petite woman in a very petite car driving cautiously. As I quickly sped up to pass her, I saw a worried lady holding the top part of her steering wheel very tightly, staring hard at the road before her. Having coasted effortlessly passed her, my anticipated relief suddenly shifted towards guilt for my impatience. After I had glanced over at the petite driver, I began to contemplate possible reasons for her driving behavior: was there any disability involved? Recent grief or physical pain? General anxiety about the road or simply, her whole life right now?

This experience was a needed reminder that I need to conscientiously make allowances for those who are "struggling." Truthfully, I should take the time to recall just how many days I myself don't feel up to par, and therefore, desire mercy from others, rather than judgment and their impatient responses. Frankly, how much does offering a little mercy truly require from us?

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with ALL of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

Blessings, Carla Gillespie



California Fires

Our hearts and prayers are with the people of Southern California who have lost everything to the LA area fires. We hold those affected by the recent events close in prayer, asking for comfort, strength, and healing.

As a church family, we are called to respond with love and action. If you feel moved to help, we encourage you to give to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), which is providing vital support and relief to those in need. Every gift makes a difference, offering hope and a reminder that they are not alone. If you would like to give through Central, please make your check out to Central UMC with UMCOR in the memo line. Let's join together in prayer and generosity, showing the light of Christ's love in the midst of the storm.

The Wisdom Study is back!

Join us Fridays at noon in the Memorial Room for a wonderful deep dive into the wisdom of the scriptures. Learn and discuss how biblical characters utilized or spurned wisdom, and discern in community how we can apply those lessons to our modern lives. During the month of December, we will delve into the Advent story and discover the biblical roots of the longing for a Messiah and the fulfillment of that longing in the surprising arrival of Jesus the Christ.

The 2025 Photo Directories are coming!

We have finalized the 2025 photo directories and they will be available starting Sunday, February 2nd. You may pick up your copy in the narthex or in the main office.

Winter Tea

On January 15 United Women in Faith hosted a "winter tea" at Friends Fellowship in the private dining room. Around 20 residents and guests attended and enjoyed visiting with one another while savoring goodies provided by members of the executive committee. It was a lovely winter afternoon!

INTERFAITH MISSION CENTER, INC., D.B.A.
COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY



SOUP-OR-BOWL SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 2ND, 2024

BRING YOUR CANNED FOOD ITEMS TO WORSHIP! IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A MONETARY DONATION, PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECK OUT TO CENTRAL UMC AND PUT "SOUP OR BOWL" IN THE MEMO LINE.

**"For I was hungry and you gave me food."
- Matthew 25:35**



A NEW COMMAND
I GIVE YOU:

**Love
One
Another**

AS I HAVE LOVED YOU,
SO YOU MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

— JOHN 13:34 —

FEBRUARY 2025

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2 Soup or Bowl Sunday	3	4	5	6 Low Vision 10:30am	7	8
9 Food Pantry Sunday	10 Trustees Mtg 6:30pm	11	12	13 Creative Hands 9am UWF Mtg 1pm	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26 Lamplighter 10am Lunch Bunch 11:30am	27 Creative Hands 9am Ad Council 6:30pm	28	

Sundays

Adult Sunday School: 9:00am
 Worship & Living Water
 Children's Church: 10:00am
 OASIS Teen group: 5:00pm

Mondays

Preschool 8:30am
 Women's Prayer 12:00pm
 Brianna's Hope 6:45pm

Wednesdays

Preschool 8:30am
 Men's Prayer 12:00pm
 Wesley Ringers 5:30pm
 Chancel Choir 6:30pm

Fridays

Preschool 8:30am
 Wisdom Study 12:00pm



Central United Methodist Church
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February Lamplighter
Central United Methodist Church
1425 East Main street
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Sunday Worship 10:00am